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Diana T Fritz 03/20/2007 03:57:58 PM From DB/Inbox: Search Results

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Text:

UNCLASSIFIED

SIPDIS  
TELEGRAM

October 29, 2003

To: No Action Addressee  
Action: Unknown  
From: AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI (ABU DHABI 4803 - UNKNOWN)  
TAGS: PREL, CMGT, CVIS, CASC  
Captions: None  
Subject: A/S HARTY DISCUSSES VISAS, HOMELAND SECURITY AND CHILD  
ABDUCTION, WITH UAE OFFICIALS  
Ref: None

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UNCLAS ABU DHABI 04803

SIPDIS  
CXABU:  
ACTION: DCM  
INFO: AMB CONS  
Laser1:  
INFO: CONS

DISSEMINATION: DCM  
CHARGE: PROG

VZCZCADI200  
OO RUEHDI RUEHC RUEHXX  
DE RUEHAD #4803/01 3021157  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
O 291157Z OCT 03 ZDS  
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2242  
RUEHDI/AMCONSUL DUBAI 3505  
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ABU DHABI 004803

SIPDIS

C O R R E C T E D COPY--(SYNTAX PARA 2,3,5,6)

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR CA/FO; NEA/FO; NEA/ARP

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [CMGT](#) [CVIS](#) [CASC](#) [KOCI](#) [TC](#)  
SUBJECT: A/S HARTY DISCUSSES VISAS, HOMELAND SECURITY AND  
CHILD ABDUCTION, WITH UAE OFFICIALS

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: DURING HER VISIT TO THE UAE, ASSISTANT  
SECRETARY FOR CONSULAR AFFAIRS MAURA HARTY ENGAGED A VARIETY

SIPDIS  
OF UNITED ARAB EMIRATES OFFICIALS, MET WITH MISSION STAFF, AND  
CONDUCTED AN INTERVIEW WITH THE ABU DHABI NEWSPAPER OF RECORD  
AL ITTIHAD. IN A MEETING WITH SENIOR UAE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS (MFA) OFFICIALS, A/S HARTY EFFECTIVELY RESPONDED TO A  
RANGE OF VISA AND HOMELAND SECURITY CONCERNS AND REITERATED  
U.S. COMMITMENT TO A STRONG BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE  
UAE. WHILE EMPHASIZING THE PRIMACY OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND  
BORDER DEFENSE IN USG POLICY, A/S HARTY REASSURED HER  
INTERLOCUTORS THAT U.S. IS ALSO COMMITTED TO SECURE AND OPEN

BORDERS AND AN EFFICIENT VISA ADJUDICATION PROCESS.

12. (SBU) DURING HER VISIT, A/S HARTY MET WITH CONSULAR STAFF IN DUBAI AND ABU DHABI AND DISCUSSED NEW CONSULAR PROCESSING REQUIREMENTS, THE MOVE TO A NEW EMBASSY COMPOUND IN ABU DHABI, AND THE PROSPECT OF DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY (DHS) OFFICIALS BEING POSTED TO THE MISSION. A/S HARTY ALSO TOOK TIME TO MENTOR THE MISSION'S JOB DURING AN HOUR-AND-A-HALF SOCIAL EVENT IN DUBAI. END SUMMARY.

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A/S HARTY DISCUSSES VISAS AND HOMELAND SECURITY  
WITH SENIOR UAEG OFFICIALS  
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13. (SBU) A/S HARTY AND AMBASSADOR MET OCTOBER 19, 2003 WITH SAIF SAEED SAAD AL SUWAIDI, MFA UNDERSECRETARY, ABDULLAH RASHED AL NUAIMI, ASSISTANT UNDERSECRETARY FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS, AHMED MUQARRAB, HEAD OF EUROPEAN AND AMERICAS DESK, AND AMBASSADOR ABDUL RAHIM ABDUL JALIL, DIRECTOR OF CONSULAR AFFAIRS. DCM, CA SPECIAL ASSISTANT SIMKIN, AND CONSULAR CHIEF ACCOMPANIED THE A/S.

14. (SBU) UNDERSECRETARY AL SUWAIDI OPENED THE MEETING BY RAISING LONG STANDING UAE CONCERNS WITH U.S. VISAS AND THEIR IMPACT ON TRAVELERS SUCH AS BUSINESSMEN, STUDENTS AND MEDICAL PATIENTS. AMBASSADOR ABDUL JALIL THEN LISTED THE PROBLEMS THE UAEG HAS EXPERIENCED WITH OBTAINING U.S. VISAS, INCLUDING A TWO-MONTH WAIT FOR CITIZENS AND OFFICIALS VISITING THE USA. FOR ADDED EMPHASIS, AMBASSADOR ABDUL JALIL POINTED TO THE CASE OF THE UAE DESK OFFICER FOR THE AMERICAS, WHO WAS INVITED BY THE U.S. EMBASSY TO ATTEND A CONFERENCE BUT DID NOT GET HIS VISA IN TIME. THIS PROBLEM IS NOT LIMITED TO STUDENTS OR OFFICIALS BUT ALSO UAE MEDICAL PATIENTS, WHO SHOULD BE GIVEN SPECIAL CONSIDERATION AS THEY ARE ALREADY CHECKED BY THE UAEG'S SECURITY SERVICES BEFORE THEY GO TO THE USA FOR GOVERNMENT-FUNDED TREATMENT. IN THIS REGARD, THE USA HAS THE RIGHT TO CHECK VISA APPLICANTS BUT SHOULD NOT DELAY EVERYONE. ABDUL JALIL COMMENTED THAT U.S. HOMELAND SECURITY PRACTICES EVEN AFFECT TOP UAEG OFFICIALS, CITING THE CASE OF THE UAE AMBASSADOR TO THE USA, WHO RECENTLY WAS FORCED TO REMOVE HIS SHOES AT A U.S. POE. FINALLY, AMBASSADOR ABDUL JALIL COMPLAINED THAT THE UAE EMBASSY IN D.C. IS FREQUENTLY NOT NOTIFIED WHEN UAE CITIZENS ARE DETAINED.

15. (SBU) IN RESPONSE, A/S HARTY THANKED BOTH UNDERSECRETARY AL SUWAIDI AND AMBASSADOR ABDUL JALIL FOR THEIR CANDOR AND STATED THAT THE USG AND THE UAE HAVE A CLOSE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. EXPLAINING THE IMPACT OF SEPTEMBER 11 IN THE U.S., SHE NOTED THAT SHE WAS IN HER OFFICE ON 9/11 AND WATCHED THE PENTAGON BURN FOR DAYS, THE FIRES OF WHICH STILL BURN FOR MANY AMERICANS. ON THE UAE AMBASSADOR TO THE USA, A/S HARTY SAID THAT SHE ALSO MUST TAKE OFF HER SHOES WHEN ASKED AT THE U.S. POE. A/S HARTY AGREED THAT THE USG HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO FACILITATE LEGITIMATE TRAVELERS AND NOTED SECRETARY POWELL'S COMMITMENT TO "SECURE BORDERS, OPEN BORDERS."

16. (SBU) A/S HARTY FURTHER STATED THAT THE USG IS DOING MUCH BETTER THIS YEAR THAN LAST YEAR IN MAKING THE SYSTEM MORE EFFICIENT. THIS YEAR ALONE, 6.8 MILLION PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD APPLIED FOR VISAS - ONLY TWO PERCENT OF WHOM REQUIRED SPECIAL CLEARANCE PROCEDURES. EIGHTY PERCENT OF THOSE ARE PROCESSED IN 10 TO 14 DAYS. AT THE SAME TIME, THE USG MUST ASK ITS FRIENDS TO ALSO CHANGE THEIR PROCEDURES IN ORDER TO MEET THE POST 9/11 REQUIREMENTS. HOWEVER, THE USG IS NOT GOING TO STOP ITS EFFORTS IN MAKING THE VISA PROCESS BETTER AND BETTER.

17. (SBU) UNDERSECRETARY AL SUWAIDI REMARKED THAT MEDICAL PATIENTS ARE INCREASINGLY GOING TO GERMANY AND STUDENTS ARE OPTING FOR AUSTRALIA RATHER THAN THE U.S. AT THE SAME TIME, AMBASSADOR ABDUL JALIL NOTED THE PROBLEMS UAE CITIZENS  
C O R R E C T E D COPY--(SYNTAX PARA 7,8,10)  
ENCOUNTER WITH THE NATIONAL SECURITY ENTRY EXIT REGISTRATION

SYSTEM (NSEERS). IN RESPONSE, A/S HARTY STATED THAT WE ALL HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO WORK CLOSELY WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY (DHS). REGARDING THE ISSUE OF AIRPORT EXIT REGISTRATION, SHE ACKNOWLEDGED THE NEED TO GIVE CLEAR, EASY DIRECTIONS ON HOW TO COMPLY. IN THIS REGARD, SECRETARY POWELL ROUTINELY COMMUNICATES WITH SECRETARY RIDGE.

18. (SBU) AMBASSADOR ABDUL JALIL STATED THAT THERE ARE DIFFERENT NSEERS PROCEDURES AT DIFFERENT AIRPORTS IN THE USA. A/S HARTY STATED THAT THE ONLY THING WORSE THAN AN OLD BUREAUCRACY IS A NEW BUREAUCRACY. SHE STATED THAT WE ARE EDUCATING OURSELVES AND ARE ASKING FOR UNDERSTANDING FROM OUR FOREIGN PARTNERS. AMBASSADOR WAHBA STATED THAT ARRIVAL AT U.S. POES IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF DHS.

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PROBLEMS FOR UAE NATIONALS IN THE U.S.  
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19. (SBU) AMBASSADOR ABDUL JALIL NOTED THAT THE USG SHOULD REALIZE THAT THE UAEG WANTS TO COOPERATE. HOWEVER, THERE HAVE BEEN CASES IN THE USA OF UAE NATIONALS BEING DETAINED IN DENVER, SPECIFICALLY, FOR NOT CARRYING THEIR UAE PASSPORTS. IN PARTICULAR, ONE UAE NATIONAL WAS DETAINED FOR THREE DAYS FOR NOT CARRYING HIS PASSPORT. NOTING THAT CARRYING A PASSPORT WAS NOT A LEGAL REQUIREMENT IN THE U.S., A/S HARTY COMMENTED THAT UAE STUDENTS SHOULD PROBABLY MAKE A COPY OF THEIR PASSPORTS AND CARRY IT AT ALL TIMES. THAT ASIDE, THE USG HAS AN IMMEDIATE OBLIGATION TO INFORM FOREIGN MISSIONS WHEN ONE OF THEIR NATIONALS ARE ARRESTED OR DETAINED. AMBASSADOR WAHBA NOTED THAT THERE ARE A LOT OF PERSONAL STORIES, BUT THAT IF THE UAEG SEES A PATTERN, IT SHOULD INFORM THE U.S. EMBASSY, WHICH HAS ALREADY HELPED SEVERAL UAE STUDENTS WITH NSEERS PROBLEMS.

110. (SBU) UNDERSECRETARY AL SUWAIDI STATED THAT THEY WOULD PREPARE A LIST OF CASES THAT NEED HELP. HE ALSO NOTED THAT AMCITS DO NOT PAY FOR UAE VISAS AND DO NOT NEED A UAE VISA TO ENTER THE UAE. HOWEVER, THE USG MAKES UAE NATIONALS PAY USD 100, POSSIBLY INCREASING TO USD 110 FOR A VISA TO THE USA. A/S HARTY REPLIED THAT MACHINE READABLE VISA FEES HAVE NOT BEEN RAISED YET, BUT THAT NINETY EIGHT PERCENT OF CA OPERATIONS ARE FEE FUNDED. CONGRESS MANDATED THE FEE INCREASE LAST TIME. AMBASSADOR ABDUL JALIL STATED THAT THE UAEG COULD CHARGE A FEE TOO. A/S HARTY REPLIED THIS WOULD BE THE PREROGATIVE OF THE UAEG, BUT NOTED THAT THE COST AND COMPLICATION OF FEE COLLECTION MIGHT NOT MAKE IT WORTHWHILE.

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UAE PASSPORTS  
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111. (SBU) UNDERSECRETARY SUWAIDI THEN RAISED THE ISSUE OF CHANGES TO PLACE OF BIRTH IN UAE NATIONAL PASSPORTS. A/S HARTY STATED THAT THIS CAUSES THE USG GREAT CONCERN. AMBASSADOR ALBUL JALIL REPLIED THAT THE UAEG HAS STOPPED THE INFREQUENT PRACTICE OF CHANGING THE PLACE OF BIRTH AND DATE OF BIRTH IN UAE PASSPORTS.

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CHILD ABDUCTION AND THE UAE  
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112. (SBU) A/S HARTY DISCUSSED THE U.S. INITIATIVE TO CONCLUDE AGREEMENTS WITH GOVERNMENTS TO REDRESS THE PROBLEMS OF INTERNATIONAL PARENTAL CHILD ABDUCTION. SHE NOTED THAT THE ISSUE WAS THE HARDEST TO CRACK IN SAUDI ARABIA. HOWEVER, SINCE JANUARY OF 2003, TEN ABDUCTED AMCIT CHILDREN HAVE BEEN RETURNED TO THE USA FROM SAUDI ARABIA. MEMORANDUMS OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) WILL ALSO BE SIGNED WITH EGYPT AND LEBANON. A DRAFT MOU IS UNDER CONSIDERATION IN JORDAN. IN THE UAE, SHE NOTED THAT THERE ARE SIX CASES INVOLVING EIGHT AMCIT CHILDREN. HOWEVER, SHE NOTED THAT THERE ARE NO UAE NATIONALS INVOLVED IN THREE OF THESE CASES AND THAT IT SHOULD BE EASY TO RETURN THE CHILDREN. THE INTENTION OF THE MOU IS TO HAVE A MORE UNIFORM WAY OF APPROACHING THE ISSUE OF INTERNATIONAL PARENTAL CHILD ABDUCTION. SHE SAID THAT THE EMBASSY WOULD SOON PRESENT A DRAFT AGREEMENT TO THE MFA.

UNDERSECRETARY AL SUWAIDI INDICATED THE UAEG WILLINGNESS TO ENGAGE. AT A LUNCH HOSTED BY THE AMBASSADOR, CONSULAR AFFAIRS DIRECTOR ABDUL JALIL TOLD A/S HARTY THAT THE CASES NOT INVOLVING UAE NATIONALS COULD BE RESOLVED IMMEDIATELY.

C O R R E C T E D COPY--(SYNTAX PARA 13)

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A/S HARTY REVIEWS CONSULAR FACILITIES  
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¶13. (SBU) AS PART OF HER VISIT, A/S HARTY MET WITH FRONT OFFICE, CONSULAR OFFICERS, AND CONSULAR STAFF TO DISCUSS THE POTENTIAL CONSOLIDATION OF THE ABU DHABI AND DUBAI NIV UNITS AFTER THE OPENING OF THE NEW EMBASSY COMPOUND (NEC) IN ABU DHABI. DURING THESE DISCUSSIONS, A/S HARTY MET WITH CONSULAR STAFF IN ABU DHABI AND DUBAI AND TOURED THE NEW BUILDING WITH THE OBO PROJECT DIRECTOR.

ALBRIGHT